940.4
S55y

A "Y" GIRL IN FRANCE

A "Y" Girl in France

LETTERS OF
KATHERINE SHORTALL

ARTI et VERITATI

BOSTON
RICHARD G. BADGER
THE GORHAM PRESS

Copyright, 1919, by Richard G. Badger

All Rights Reserved

940.4
S55y

MADE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE GORHAM PRESS, BOSTON, U. S. A.

At the solicitation of many friends I am publishing, unknown to my daughter, these letters written by her while in the service of the Y. M. C. A. The letters have come to me scribbled in lead pencil and in every color of ink upon an assortment of stationery that in itself revealed the snatching of whatever opportunity to write occurred in a busy life.

I make here public apology to the author if I have caused to be printed anything she would prefer not to have said outside the family circle.

The spirit manifest in these letters has been that of hundreds of girls wearing the same colors, doing faithfully and perseveringly the work that was given them to do, whether it chanced to be dramatic and exhilarating or plain drudgery. To each one of them as she doffs her uniform I would say, in the recent happy phrasing of a statesman: "Let us not demobilize the Spirit of Helpfulness!" and with sincere homage I dedicate this little book

TO OUR "Y" GIRLS.

M. C. S.

September, 1919.

A "Y" GIRL IN FRANCE

A "Y" Girl in France

Monday, Dec. 23, 1918.

Well, dear Family, here I am at sea, and everything is fine. At noon on Saturday our tugs pulled us away from the dock ahead of the "Prinzes Juliana" which lay alongside. Great waving of handkerchiefs between the blue-hatted crowds of Y. M. C. A. girls on both ships. The harbor was misty and the sky line of New York was very beautiful and shadowy. As we steamed out we passed the "Baltic" coming in, laden with troops. The boys were wild with enthusiasm at returning home. Many had climbed way up the rigging and as we passed they all cheered and we cheered back, and handkerchiefs fluttered and hats were waved. Then we went by the Statue of Liberty and out to sea. Before long the deck was covered with tired Y. M. C. A. girls lying prostrate in their steamer chairs with their eyes closed. You never saw so many green capes and blue hats in your life! We are in the great majority on the boat. The sea was calm and silvery, and it was delicious to have nothing to do but to enjoy it and to let that salt water lethargy creep over you. However, I also felt a cold creeping over me, in spite of "red pills" and fresh air, and Sunday when I woke up I had a feeling in my chest that made me decide the better part of valor was to remain in bed. It was a nuisance, because the weather outside was like a day in June. I looked out of the porthole onto a level blue sea and warm, balmy air blew in. It was unbelievable. The ship's doctor visited me, tapped me and put on a hot compress, and I lay in my upper berth all day in a sort of feverish stupor, enjoying the faint motion of the ship and the singing from the church service which floated in to me clearly, and this morning I woke up practically well. I have been out all day, walked four miles and feel splendid. Such weather you never dreamed of for December. Clear blue skies, a chipper breeze off the starboard bow and waves just big enough to make us pitch gently in a very unobjectionable way. This evening's clouds are piling up round the horizon, so who knows but old Eolus may be getting ready to send us a Christmas present.

There are four girls to each stateroom. My room-mates are very nice girls, and we get along very well in spite of the congestion. There is a Miss S., a very splendid, dark-haired, athletic-looking girl who attracts me exceedingly. Then there is Miss A. from Baltimore, with a strong

Southern accent, kind-hearted and sensible. Also a quiet little mouse of a girl, Miss C., who is very earnest and wants to improve each moment, and was quite worried about herself because she sat in her chair a whole afternoon and didn't do anything.

There is a sprinkling of Englishmen on board, a few American men, ten Japanese, an Italian Colonel who apparently is very much of a lady-killer, one Y. M. C. A. *man* and about a hundred of us in our high collars and greenish suits.

The "Caronia" has been an armored cruiser in the Pacific during the first part of the war, and then was hastily fitted up to carry troops. She is in rather bad condition, battered and dirty. Nevertheless ship life seems just what it was before the war. The food is good, tea is served, the attendants with their nice English voices are all so remarkably courteous and—charming! That is the only word for it. And now I must go and dress for dinner, which means, I shall put on a clean high collar. Ugh!

Sunday, Dec. 29th.

I must tell you about our Christmas at sea. It is the custom on all English ships for the stewards at midnight to go all through the ships singing carols. As I lay in my berth I heard them begin, such a fine men's chorus, singing in harmony. They came down our corridor, passed us, the sound gradually dying away, then the "Y" girls began and also went all over the ship, singing very well. Christmas was a wet, foggy day. The old "Caronia" would put her nose down into a wave and send a shower of spray over the decks. There were a few seasick people, yet one would hardly have called it rough. In the morning there was a short Christmas service, but the nicest part of the day came in the afternoon and will always stand out in my memory. All the girls had a tremendous lot of candy and fruit, and they decided to divide it all up so that every man employed on board the ship should get a present from the Y. M. C. A. In the afternoon we all went way down into the lower regions of the ship to sing and to distribute our gifts. There all the men who work down in the darkness were assembled. The "Y" girls sang, then the men sang, Christmas carols at first, but the party got merrier and merrier, and funny songs and solos and stunts of all kinds were performed. An old piano had been brought down. One of the stewards, a true comedian, gave us several awfully good songs, with a charm and a rhythm that were quite irresistible. One little Irish-looking boy with waving dark hair and a mischievous, sensitive face, sang cockney songs, the others joining in the chorus. Then, as the "Y" girls sang a catchy "rag" he was pushed forward and began a nimble clog dance. The first thing I knew, I was in the ring dancing with him! There was a shout of surprise from everybody, and they kept us at it over and over again. Finally we left, feeling really happy. It had been one of those rare parties where every one contributed to the entertainment. A few days later the enclosed expression of gratitude from the "catering department" was handed to each "Y" girl, also several others, equally appreciative, from the engineers and members of the crew.

The day after Xmas is a holiday in England. The men were again trying to have a little festivity down below and I was asked to go down and dance for them, so of course I did. I did the "Cachuca" to horrible old waltz music banged out by one of the stewards, I did every dance I ever knew and more than I knew; and then we had songs and more stunts from the men. Such good songs, and so catchy. It was great fun, and the men were so appreciative. And all down in the dark, damp, unknown region of a big ship!

The American men on board are not to our country's credit; a poor lot. The Italian colonel is the centre of attraction. He is a fascinating person, liked by men and women equally. He has borrowed my guitar for the voyage and sings and whistles to delighted groups.

This morning, after a foggy but calm voyage, we came up on deck to find everything glistening in sun. The sea was streaked in green and black and the white caps gleamed, while ever widening patches of blue appeared among the clouds. To port, barely distinguishable in the gray clouds, was Ireland. Pretty soon, on the other side, Wales came into sight. The day has become brighter and brighter. Continually we pass little steamers. There is the thrill of approaching land. We do not know where we are going. Such a delightful, irresponsible sensation! I know just how a boy must feel in the army.

New Year's Day, 1919.

Here I am, writing like any soldier at a Y. M. C. A. canteen in Liverpool. There are four of us crowded round one little table in a large, bare, smoky room. The place is buzzing with soldiers, a game of billiards is going on in one corner and in another a graphophone is never allowed one moment's rest.

You would laugh, (or perhaps you wouldn't!) if you could see me camping out in the wilds of England. Sunday night when we were all at dinner on the "Caronia" the engines suddenly stopped throbbing, and when we went up on deck there were the lights of Liverpool on either side of us, a sky full of stars above, and little lighted steamers scudding about. We were to ride at anchor in the harbor all night. A tug brought the Alien Officer on board, and each one of us and our passports had to undergo his scutiny. It was a tedious business, and as I did not come till near the end of the alphabet he didn't get around to me till after midnight. One thing I have learned already is the immense advantage of belonging to the first of the alphabet. Your future is made or marred by your initial.

Monday we were up at five thirty, and finally, after interminable bustle and waiting and crowding, we and our luggage were through the customs. The Y. M. C. A. here weren't expecting us, and were rather overwhelmed at the prospect of housing us. They got accommodations for the first thirty (of the alphabet) at a good hotel. The remaining sixty-five were sent to a Y. M. C. A. hut called Lincoln Lodge, where one floor of soldiers' barracks was turned over to us. Imagine a huge chill room with brick walls, containing four hundred double-decker beds and nothing else. The atmosphere was like a tightly bottled and preserved London fog. It was raining outside. On each bed was a burlap-hay mattress and a coarse blanket. After lunch downstairs I fixed myself up in my own blankets with my fur coat on top, got very comfortable and had a three hours' rest. Every night I ever spent on the rocky ground at our Mountain Lake stood me in good stead, and I didn't mind my lumpy, "rolly" mattress a bit, but it has been hard on many of the girls. That night I slept twelve and a half hours, and woke at nine thirty yesterday much refreshed. In the morning I helped with the dish washing down in the canteen in the basement; such a filthy place I don't wonder the "flu" spreads. I don't want to begin to criticise so soon, but if I see much more of the conditions I saw there I shall do my little bit to instigate a reform, at least where I work.

In the afternoon I went with a nice Washington girl, Miss P. and a great enormous Irish officer with a gentle smile and sweet voice, to see a German submarine in the harbor. It was one of their largest models which has surrendered. We were allowed on board and examined it all. It gave me a strange feeling to be walking that deck and to read the German signs everywhere, and to see those deadly guns, now become the playthings of little boys who swarmed over the boat and up into the gunners' seats.

New Year's Eve the Y. M. C. A. made use of all of us girls and gave a dance, five of us furnishing the music, I alternately playing my guitar and then using it as a drum, beating it on the back with my ring. It made quite a hit. And really with two violins, ukulele and piano we weren't a half bad orchestra. The "Y" men were immensely grateful as they had searched the town unsuccessfully for a band. The place was jammed with soldiers, American, Canadian and British, and really it was a very jolly, nice affair. And now we are on the point of departure for London.

Paris, January 12, 1919.

So much has happened since I wrote you from Liverpool and we have all passed through so many moods that I wonder whether I can think back and tell you everything. We left Liverpool for London a hundred strong, the Y. M. C. A. having reserved enough first class coaches for us all. We were a jolly party in our compartment. I played the guitar and we all sang. We had afternoon tea served at stations and it was all very much like peace times except that the train was not heated at all and was excessively damp and cold, and in the compartments were various signs ordering the public to keep the shades down after dark and on no account to let any light show. The English landscape was beautiful, soft and undulating, but *damp* looking. That dampness gets into your soul. The trees were brown, without leaves, yet the grass in the fields was vivid green.

We arrived in London after dark, about eight p. m. There we were met by some "Y" men, and after the identification of baggage, which with a hundred girls is a desperate affair, we were all loaded into huge trucks or "brakes" as they call them, and carted to our various destinations. About twenty of us were dumped out at the Melbourne Hotel, a decidedly God-forsaken place just off Russell Square. There I shared a room with Miss P. an awfully nice Washington girl. If you could see that room! It was desperately cold, and so damp the towels were wet. A broken gas mantle way up near the ceiling gave a dim greenish light which seemed to mix up with the fog and become part of the oppressing atmosphere. We were back in the land of pitcher and bowl and slop jar, and brushing your teeth from a tumbler. Neither of us had heroism enough to bathe, but crawled into our humid bed with sweaters and warm wrappers and bedsocks on, and all the capes and fur coats piled on top. Somehow we shivered ourselves to sleep.

The next morning the sun was actually shining. After a sloppy breakfast, we all reported at the Imperial Hotel where we were given instructions on all kinds of things. We were to be sent to Paris in relays just as quickly as possible. In the meantime London was ours. Miss P., who knew London, and I went shopping. I was chiefly interested in discovering all evidences of war. London *had* changed somehow, yet not exactly in the way one might vaguely imagine. Shopes were all thriving apparently, Liberty's windows as entrancing as ever, movement and crowds everywhere. Yet if you observed closely you saw how few automobiles and taxis there were, though the busses were the same as ever, except that there were women-conductors. The streets were absolutely flooded with men in uniform, soldiers of all kinds. There were many Australians and New Zealanders, tall, lean men with weather-beaten faces and a certain attractive swagger which is augmented by their broad-brimmed hats turned up at one side. Canadians were everywhere, and in less numbers, Americans. And of course the British in their splendid uniforms with their unmistakable bearing. I was glad to see so many, many specimens of noble Anglo-Saxons. They seem to me to be the hope of England. The most striking of all are the Scotch; perfect giants of men, in their kilts and plaids, bare knees and all. Then there were many wounded, men wearing the blue hospital uniform, with arms and legs gone, heads bandaged, limping forth to get the air; but most of them smiling. Miss P.

and I decided that the greatest evidence of the terrible strain of war was in the expression of people on the street. No one ever smiled. Faces were dull and joyless. Clothes were old. Shoes were shapeless and soggy. Every one seemed hopeless rather than actively sorrowful. And in the keen, blonde faces of the men one sees about Whitehall, the men on the inside of affairs, there was a far-away, set, determined expression.

We had arrived in London on New Year's day, Wednesday, and were to leave on Sunday. Sunday afternoon we were all taken to South Hampton and after interminable business at the customs house we boarded a channel boat for Havre. A smooth passage. At 5.45 a. m. I looked out of the porthole and there was the shore of France, all black, with little lights twinkling and a great white searchlight flashing back and forth over the water. After breakfast, when we went up on deck, the sky was rosy with the approaching sunrise, and suddenly in a burst of glory the sun came out of a golden cloud and warmed us all! It was an indescribably beautiful scene. The masts of many ships and all the ropes and rigging against the glowing pink clouds in the sky, the beloved bustle of a harbor, the French language, the smiling French faces, the excitement of arrival at dawn, all made us happy, and I, for one, loved France with all my heart at that moment. We were gathered on the wharf for some time, where we watched red-capped German prisoners unloading our trunks from the ship. Then, in rows of fours, we were marched up through the muddy streets to the Y. M. C. A. headquarters. There we were given a good, direct talk by the man in charge and were again marched off for an early luncheon. My admiration for the Y. M. C. A. is rising continually. I am proud and thrilled to be a part of it. I am glad I came.

"Première Classe" coaches were reserved for us on our trip to Paris. We left Havre at noon, closely packed into our compartments. Such wonderful country as we went through! We stopped at Rouen and had fine views of the Cathedral, the excited "Y" girls running from one side of the car to the other in their effort to miss nothing. In the Rouen station a fine old lady was giving coffee at a Red Cross canteen. A continuous stream of soldiers in blue came up to her booth. I saw one greenish-coated Italian soldier step up and order coffee just as a French soldier was beginning his. The two chinked their cups together, while the shrewd-faced old lady in her flowing Red Cross cap beamed at them.

The train then became crowded, and a French soldier came into our compartment. I got to talking with him. He had been a prisoner in Germany ever since August, 1914, and had been back in France just five days. He was very young, with one of the saddest faces I ever saw. I asked him how he had been treated. He said that he had never seen any cruelty to prisoners, except that the last two years of the war they had been so poorly nourished. Much else he told us about the French attitude toward their allies. I have talked with many French and American boys during this past week and have heard many stories, but they must wait till I get home. Apparently the men in the ranks from Australia, Canada and the United States, get on well with each other and with the French, but they say many things against the English. I think this is due to a sort of provincial antipathy on the part of our boys to anything "different" from what they are used to. I have run against this attitude in many since I have been here and it seems to me a great pity. Whenever I hear boys talking against the English I am going to try to make them see differently. I have found one exception. Such a nice boy whom I talked with yesterday in the train. He had been in the one U. S. division that fought at Ypres. As he described the battle line his face was drawn with the horror of it, yet he had to talk about it, and I let him, hoping he would "get it off his chest" that way. "One thing is," he said, "that no one knows what the British have been through in this war. Terrible as the Marne and the Argonne were, Ypres was ten times worse. It was the most frightful place on the front, and the British have done wonders in holding it."

He told me of many of the horrors, and talked about the wonderful chaplain of his regiment who ministered to the dying boys wherever they fell and who saw to it that the thousands of unburied dead were buried and their identification tags secured. He said that you could tell by looking at a Prussian officer that he would stick a knife through a baby! Then we got to talking about his home in Ohio. When we parted he gave my hand a grip like a vise and said: "You're the first honest-to-goodness American girl I've talked to for fifteen months. I sure won't forget you!" To digress still further, I just want to say that it is a new and I believe quite wonderful experiment, this sending of the right sort of girls to work and to associate with the boys in the army. War *is* bad. The herding of men in armies is bad. I have never before realized how much men need good women. It is up to us to *be* good, in all the joyous, efficient, and true sense of the word.

To return to our trip to Paris. After our soldier left us, two nice French women squeezed into our compartment. The train got fuller and fuller. In the corridor a tall English officer sat on his bag and puffed his pipe at us. Next to him three exuberant French poilus half lay and half sat all in a heap, their shrapnel helmets, canteens and packs piled about them. There was much laughter and snatches of song among them, and many winks at the English officer who remained supremely indifferent to them. One of them smoked two cigarettes at a time for our benefit, sometimes puffing one through his nose and the other through his mouth. It was long after dark, and we had had nothing to eat or drink since eleven a. m., and we were all squeezed so tight we couldn't move. At last I offered the officer my large suitcase for a seat, which he accepted. One of the French soldiers sat on it with him, the ice was broken, and we all had a very delightful time till we got to Paris at midnight. A hasty bite at the canteen, and we were rushed to another station and put on the train for Versailles where a hotel was reserved for us. There we have stayed under very damp and cold conditions, going into Paris every day for more conferences, physical examinations, etc. Tomorrow I expect to receive my assignment. I have no idea where it will be.

You should see la Place de la Concorde. All the captured German guns have been gathered there. These great, hideous things fascinate me in a strange way, and I wandered among them the other day examining them. There are hundreds of trench mortars that sent the dreaded "Minnenwurfer"; ugly, chunky guns, peculiarly vicious looking. Around the obelisk are arranged the long-distance guns, their gigantic muzzles pointing in the air. Hundreds and hundreds of guns! As you look toward the Arc de Triomphe the Champs Elysees is lined on both sides with guns close together, all the way. They are all camouflaged, mottled and streaked in green and brown. It is bewildering to look at them. They are the symbol, I suppose, of a great indelible mark in the book of history, which later generations will gaze on with curiosity. But now, one little mortal standing in the presence of those recently silenced mouths, can only shiver and go away. It is too soon.

January 24th.

I have hated to write for the simple reason that I have been having bronchitis. Not serious at all, but I thought a whole ocean between us might make you think it was serious. Really, if I *had* to be sick, I am lucky to have been here in comfortable quarters with medical care and no one depending on me for work. But it was a nuisance and a delay when I didn't want to be delayed.

January 26th.

I have been out now, yesterday and to-day and am feeling finely. Here in Paris the "Y" has its own medical staff and all its workers are given the best of care. Out "in the field" we come under the army doctor's care. But I don't expect to need any such care. I have received my assignment which is Sémur, somewhere near Dijon. All I can find out about it is that there is *mud* and that I "shall be on my own resources and initiative a good deal." They must have some confidence in me. Oh, I am so eager to get to work!

It is wonderful to be in Paris just now, even though one must stay indoors. I find the French newspapers intensely interesting and read them from cover to cover. A truly lofty spirit runs through them all. The men who write the editorials are certainly spiritual leaders, public teachers and guides. I keep running across things I want to send to you just to show what an elevating force a newspaper can be. It is because they, with every other industry, have been working for the salvation of their country. And yet—Europe is blind. Never has there been such need for understanding of economics and Christian strength. Thank heaven, some of the leaders of the Peace Conference seem to possess both!

Yesterday I passed one of the "mutilés de la guerre." He had no legs. He was propelling himself by his hands and arms in a sort of bicycle, crossing the street valiantly. A steamer rug decently wrapped around him concealed his deformity. He was in his uniform. The machine struck the curb and stopped. He could not force it over. How happy I was to be there for just that moment! I easily lifted him and helped him over. He thanked me with sweet French courtesy, and he went on, and I went on; but his gentle, thin, suffering face!

One sees almost none of the terrible results of war in Paris. London was far, far worse. I am told that the French Government has provided other places for "les mutilés." Instead, all over Paris are sturdy bands of little "poilus," marching in their extremely *supple* order. And many times a day squads of French cavalry go clattering under my window. The reserves are being demobilized and they are everywhere.

Pouillenay, France,
February 7, 1919.

Dearest Family: If I have let more than a week go by since my last letter please forgive me. These have been days full of events, and in the brief intervals between events I have had to rest in order to keep a full supply of energy on tap for the occasion to come. When one is the only woman among some 1500 men, one must not slump. But I'll tell you all about it.

On the Monday after I wrote you last, the doctor signed my release and things began to move. I was to go to Sémur, in Burgundy. I knew no more about it than that. Tuesday, at 2.30 I was to pull out of the Gâre de Lyons.

In order to travel in France which is all under military rule, a great many documents, tickets, and identification papers are necessary, and it takes a great deal of labor and patience to procure them all. The Y. M. C. A. office in Paris is an enormous and hectic place, with its various departments poorly co-ordinated; so I, like every one else, did a great deal of running up and down stairs and much retracing of steps before everything concerning baggage, tickets, money, equipment, mail, etc., was attended to.

Tuesday morning, I and my baggage were at the station two hours ahead of train-time as I had been warned was necessary. There I received the joyful news that there was no 2.30 train to Sémur. That there was one at nine in the evening and another at 7.00 a. m. I had been in France long enough not to be upset by a mere trifle like that, so I set about registering my baggage and attending to the dozens of things that are necessary at the station. A most delightful old porter was my guide, counsellor and friend, leading me through the maze of red tape with unfaltering steps. I entrusted all my handbaggage to him for the night, which would seem rash to all who hadn't looked into his shrewd and kindly face. And then I walked back into Paris with only a toothbrush in my pocket. After reporting my delay at headquarters, who scowled at me for their mistake, I got a room at the Hotel Richepanse, near the Place de la Concorde. Rooms are hard to find in Paris these days, and I had to do a good deal of wandering before I secured this one. I was glad I didn't have my copious and heavy luggage. After a good rest, I did a little frivolous shopping, including a fetching and most unmilitary hat. Heaven knows when I shall wear it, but it folds up flat and I couldn't resist it. And I had supper with a harmless little "Y" girl and went to bed early.

The next morning at 5.30 I crept down six flights of stairs in the pitch dark. By the light of a candle in the lobby an old woman gave me a cup of black coffee and a hunk of bread. I drank the coffee and took the bread and went out into the blue black of just-before-dawn. The street was deserted, and I munched my bread as I hurried along. My adventure was beginning! Arriving at La Place de la Concorde I could see the obelisk and the yawning guns silhouetted against the lighting sky. I went down into the Metro and in time arrived at the station. My dear old porter was outside looking for me. We got the bags and guitar, and he installed me in a first class compartment where there were already two French officers. With much courteous fuss, room was made for me and the bags were stowed away on top. Then I asked the porter to buy for me the "Echo de Paris" paying him for all he had done. We waited for some time, and the officer sitting next to me, an elderly gentleman in a great bearskin coat over his uniform, offered me his paper, saying, "He will never bring you yours, Mademoiselle; you have too much confidence in these men." "Oh, I am sure he will bring it," I replied. "Il a été si aimable pour moi tout le temps;" which made both men smile and shrug their shoulders.

The whistle blew, the train jerked, when suddenly the door opened and there was the fat old porter all out of breath with my newspaper. "Voilà, Mademoiselle!" he cried, flourishing it at me." They didn't have the Echo in the station and I had to go way up the street for it." And the Frenchmen cheered!

Two nice American officers came into our compartment and we all had breakfast together in the dining-car. Everybody talks to everybody else in

France now. They got off the train in an hour or so, and I was left to the mercies of the French army which immediately started a rapid cross-fire of conversation with me as the target. In reality we, or at least I, had an awfully good time and they told me many amusing and interesting things which I can't tell you because I foresee that this letter is going to be horribly long.

At two o'clock I got off at a God-forsaken little junction called Les Laumes. My spirits were high, however, because all around were snow-covered beautiful hills, patches of woods, and winding roads outlined by slender poplars with bunches of green mistletoe growing way up in their branches. There are many Americans billeted at Les Laumes. Poor boys! A big M. P. (military policeman) met me at the station. The M. P. is your salvation if you are honest and your terror if you are not. This was a tall, powerful, bushy-eyebrowed young westerner. He picked up my bags as if they were nothing at all and escorted me to the restaurant.

How can I ever begin to describe to you the sweetness and the fineness of our boys over here! I am proud, proud of America. I love the real spirit of her which these boys have preserved and strengthened in these little villages way off in France. You think I ought to work with children.

But I tell you these boys are children; wonderfully powerful and dexterous children; and I play and work with them as though they were children, and we have had happy times together. I see now what there is for me to do. I pray that I may do it, in order to help them and be worthy of them during these difficult, tedious, dangerous days of waiting, with nothing to do.

But to return to my nice M. P. with the bushy eyebrows. He got me an army car to take me to Sémur, with a soft-voiced Southerner to run it. It was a delightful ride of twenty miles or so through chilly country glistening with snow; and all the time the boy talked of home in Mississippi, and his mother, and what he wanted to do when he got back. He took me to the Y. M. C. A. headquarters at Sémur. There I met Mr. M. of Salem, Mass., who is my chief. It seems that Sémur is the centre of all Y. M. C. A. activities with the 78th Division which did much heroic fighting all along the front. Mr. M. is a delightful gentleman and a real man. He has been with the boys in the midst of the fighting. We had a good talk. He finally decided to send me to Pouillenay with the 2nd Battalion of the 311th Infantry, 78th Division. "This is an experiment, Miss Shortall," he said. "You will be the only American woman in the town. The town is off the main line and the boys have not had their share of comforts and amusements. The "Y" has run to the dogs. Everything is gloomy. Do you want the job?" I said it was just what I wanted. The next morning a nice "Y" man put me and my baggage into a car and ran me over to Pouillenay about ten miles over the hills.

Pouillenay is a tiny, peaked-roofed village of mud and stones, with a river babbling through its centre where the women wash and the geese wade, and old stone bridges span it. All about are hills, lovely hills. In this French setting, place 1500 American boys in khaki! They are everywhere! The dazed and stupefied old natives wandering around in their wooden shoes are in the minority. The crooked streets resound to American voices, American jokes and songs, and huge U. S. trucks go thundering over the ancient cobblestones, while the insulted geese go to the side of the road looking so wrathfully dignified and stately that I laugh every time I see them, and the black and white speckled hens shriek and run for their lives in all directions, often into the houses whose doors are on the level with the street. This town was to be my home. I was left in the care of Lieutenant Robinson, who has been most kind to me, as every one else has been.

(I'll send you descriptions of my friends here after I discover who censors the mail!)

Billets were found for me at the house of Mme. and M. Gloriod, the nicest old couple that ever were. I have a tiny room with a tiny stove, which nevertheless eats lots of wood. Madame Gloriod, energetic and kindhearted, rosy-cheeked and jolly, brings a delicious breakfast to me every morning and lights my fire. Talk about luxury! And I eat it in leisure from the depths of my voluminous bed. (More undeserved good luck, mother!) And all this costs me about three francs a day. My regular "mess" aside from breakfast is at Battalion Headquarters, presided over by Major S. who they say was a well known New York lawyer before the war. He is in every way a cultivated gentleman admired by the whole battalion. He has been extremely kind to me, making me feel quite at home. At his mess are six other officers, lieutenants of various colors. I have also dined with the officers of the other companies and it is very jolly. But I am not here for the gay life; don't believe it. My headquarters is the Y canteen, a miserable little room with a counter, a stove, and rough benches around it. The men pour in here and smoke and talk. My guitar is at their disposal and they use it. Often I play it and we have real sings. My third night, while a group of us were singing, Corporal Johnson, of F Company, huge and sandy-haired, and Corporal Martin, stalwart and handsome, burst into the crowded room followed by other members of F Co. "Clear the way!" shouted Corporal Martin, making his way toward me, and then with a sweeping bow and with a grand manner he invited me to "mess" with the men of the best platoon of the best company of the best battalion of the best etc., etc., on the following evening. Of course I accepted on the spot. "Now shall we give the lady a song?" said Sergeant Riggs, stepping out. And they sang. They raised the roof! Great songs they were too. Then I was presented with a mess kit just like the soldiers and with mock solemnity was given a lesson in how to use it. Then I rehearsed it for their benefit, my purposeful blunders calling forth roars of laughter.

The next evening they called for me. In army style we marched snappily through the streets to F Co. mess hall, a long wooden building with dirt floor. I was placed in the front row with a corporal on either side to keep me in position. The mess was a real and delicious feast. Those boys had contributed extra to it, and a whole pig had been roasted, not to mention caldrons of vegetables, jelly-cake, doughnuts, and coffee *sweetened* coffee! I drank a quart of it at least. Then Sergeant Riggs, a humorous character and my staunch friend now, gave a speech welcoming me to Pouillenay. I can tell you it made the tears come to my eyes, these men, so chivalrous, so unreserved in their welcome of a woman into their midst; and I dedicated myself there and then to them, resolved to do everything in my power to make their stay here brighter and better. But the biggest thing that I do is not of my doing at all; it lies in simply being a woman. You really wouldn't laugh if you were over here and saw these boys hungering for love and for home. Well, of course I answered the sergeant's speech, and then there was cheering and then singing. Corporal Martin then stepped forward and said in his oratorical manner. "We have now come to the conclusion of this ceremony, which consists in your washing your mess kit." Roars of laughter! I was placed in the line and we all moved up to the garbage pail; next, to a huge tank of decidedly greasy hot water into which we plunged our mess kits; then on to a kettle of rinsing water where we gave them another dip. That being over, I was invited to a show given by one of the other companies in one of the mess halls, and as there was half an hour to spare, it was decided that we have a parade through the town. Of course it was dark by this time. So with a sergeant taking one arm and a corporal the other, we marched and marched, singing all the time, through the little black streets, up the hill and round the church and down again, over the bridge and back to the mess hall where the show awaited us. "Now you can write home that you have marched with the American army," said Sergeant Riggs.

On another day I happened to be passing when F Co. was drilling. The sergeant insisted that I join the ranks. So with a rifle I blundered through the drill, my mistakes causing much merriment.

I really have been doing a little work; don't worry. I have been cook and nurse for three boys with influenza, two in their gloomy billets and the other in a cold, damp house. That has taken a good deal of time. Also the Y. M. C. A. has just put up a large tent to be used instead of its present inadequate quarters and I, with the help of many boys, have been fixing it up. On Wednesday I went to Sémur on a shopping tour, riding in on an open limber drawn by mules. The driver told me those mules had delivered many loads of rations to the boys in the front trenches by night and had been through gas and shell fire of the worst kind. It seems that mules can stand much more than horses. At the Sémur Y. M. C. A. I was able to get flags and posters, tables and benches for our tent, which were loaded on to the limber. The next day we set to work on our interior decorating. Never did the hanging of magnificent paintings in a rich mansion receive more consideration than the placing of our French and American posters. Symmetry is the rule of the army! If I put a picture on one side of the tent, it was absolutely necessary to put one of the same size exactly opposite. At the end of the long tent are the French and American flags crossed, and under them, cut with painstaking care from a 1917 Liberty Loan poster, hangs the Liberty Bell with the words "Ring it Again" above. A wreath of smilax gathered from the woods encircles each electric light. Really it is very pretty and gay. But there is a big drawback; the dampness. The floor is covered with damp sawdust, and one little stove burning green wood is not enough to dry it. The captain of the Supply Co. has promised another stove, but until it comes and has been kept burning several days we can't think of moving in. I have my heart set on making it the brightest and warmest spot in town. Wine and cognac shops are my strong competitors. I must get busy.

How would you like to send all your copies of "Life" and any other magazines to me instead of to the great unknown? They would be greatly appreciated in Pouillenay. And here's a novel suggestion from a "highbrow Shortall." Papa, (I exempt Mamma), won't you invite H. and M. to every musical comedy that comes along, and whenever you hear a song that is new and good and snappy, send me the music "toot sweet" as the boys say.

Feb. 14th.

On the other side of this card I have marked my present home on "Main Street." If you follow this road over the hills you come to the heights where Vercingetorix of the Gauls made his last stand against Julius Cæsar. This is historical country. Where javelins and arrows once flew thick, hordes of Americans are now living, the latest liberators of these old vineyards. And almost on the site of a pagan temple stands the Y. M. C. A. tent where a twentieth century priestess from Chicago hands out cigarettes and plays ragtime. We are in our tent and drawing crowds.

One of these streets is called "La rue des Quatres Ponts." It is as pretty as its name, but the American boys don't see any beauty in any of it, and I can't blame them. All they care about is "God's own country." I do hope for their sakes that the Division will be ordered to move soon.

I am happy and well, and spring is in the air.

Feb. 18th.

Here is another view of our tiny town. Just at present everything is buried under most fearful and wonderful mud. I never stir without my arctics. I am glad I brought two pairs.

Yesterday being Sunday, I made about forty gallons of hot chocolate which I served in the tent all the afternoon. It was a rainy day and you should have seen the men pile in and gather round the huge army caldron with their cups. The tent was warm and cheerful and it was all very jolly.

The day before I had a new experience. I rode over to Sémur in a side-car or "wife-killer" as they call them; you know, those little basket affairs attached to a motor-cycle. The Catholic chaplain who is also a young lieutenant, drove it, and we went about forty miles an hour over hill and dale. He was officiating at a funeral in Sémur, while I bought cups, dishpans, and various other utensils for our chocolate outfit. I packed them all into the side-car and you should have heard our load jingle and clatter as we whizzed back over the rough road!

Feb. 23rd.

Yesterday (Saturday afternoon) I walked with three officers to the town of Alise, about five miles from Pouillenay. It is a most picturesque little village on the hillside. Above it on the top of the hill is an enormous statue of Vercingetorix. It is here that he made his last stand against Cæsar. On the top of the hill are the ruins of a Roman village; a small coliseum, a temple with several beautiful colums still standing, baths, aqueducts, and all the paraphernalia of first class ruins. The three lieutenants I went with are very jolly, nice men, and we poked and pried into everything in most irreverent and frivolous spirit. One of them, Lieut. McK., a very young Princeton fellow, had recently studied up the ruins and kept giving information about them in highbrow manner. Every statement he made was immediately challenged by the others, and great betting contests arose as to the depth of wells, Roman methods of heating water, etc., all with the continuous stream of jokes that congenial Americans keep up when they are off for a good time. These were the officers of F Co., 311th Infantry, who have been very cordial to me.

March 1st, 1919.

Again a full, full week has slipped past, and I haven't even begun to tell you of the week before that. Such a life as I have gotten myself into! If I had any time to ponder at all I might get dizzy, but luckily there is nothing for me to do except use my wits and go on. Since I last wrote you I have been from ballet dancer on the mess hall stage to mother-confessor and staid counsellor of homesick boys. I have been cook and dishwasher, both on a wholesale scale, and I have been hostess at an officers' ball.

I must tell you about the ballet dancing because it was such fun. I didn't want Valentine's day to go by without some little celebration, so I got the sergeants of the various companies together to see if we couldn't get up an impromptu stunt show. Everybody joined in enthusiastically, and in the afternoon we had an uproarious rehearsal in the Supply Co. Mess Hall which is also the Pouillenay theatre. A few violins and two drums were scraped together, and in half an hour we had a little orchestra playing such contagious ragtime that every one was jigging and beating time and cutting all sorts of capers. These boys went simply wild over the first music they had heard in months. The orchestra with the aid of a toothless old piano did wonders. There is lots of talent buried in khaki! The snare drum rolled finely, and another snare drum with the membrane loosened played the part of a rather pudgy, indecisive bass drum. It didn't matter! One boy made an ingenious whistle out of his mess kit, and trilled and whistled, generally playing the part of piccolo, giving life to the orchestra. The rehearsal, if it didn't put the finishing touches on our performance, at least was jolly good fun and filled us with invincible self-confidence for the evening. I had arranged a Valentine tableau for the end, and Mme. Gloriod at home had pinned hundreds of paper flowers on my gray steamer rug in the form of a huge heart. I had even written a sentimental poem which I was to read aloud, and on the whole it was to be a very pretty valentine, when suddenly, about six o'clock came the news that a Y. M. C. A. moving picture show had come to town and would have the mess hall that evening. Our show was off. I was disappointed, especially since the movie machine broke down in the middle of the performance and couldn't be fixed. However, we decided to give our show on the following Monday. And we did. And a ripping good show it was! It went off with snap and the audience was gratifyingly appreciative. Imagine the long, narrow mess hall with its dirt floor, board tables and benches, crowded and packed with soldiers. The light was dim and the air thick with tobacco smoke. At one end is the rough board stage with army blankets pinned up for curtains. Below the stage was the orchestra, all alert for its first performance, and back of the curtains were we, the actors, packed in pretty tight, amid all the excitement and bustle and fun of the moment before the curtain rises. There was I, alone, among all those great rough men! Yet I don't know why I should call them rough. More sweet consideration was never shown any one than was shown me that evening. My overshoes were taken off; a chair was placed for me in the "wings"; as soon as I finished my part my coat was put on and buttoned up for me; and in a thousand little ways these boys took care of me. I did two dances for them. One was a scarf dance that I made up to the "Missouri Waltz," and then the good old cachuca, arranged for another waltz. I had to adapt my dances to the available music. Of course I won an easy triumph, having no competitors, and being the first girl they had seen on the stage for many a day. There's no danger of my getting vain; don't worry. The other stunts ranged from the comic to the serious. All were loudly applauded. Some were awfully good. One sensitive-faced boy played the violin. He had been gassed on the front and had completely lost his voice. It seemed as though he put everything he could not say into that three-dollar violin, such a beautiful, living tone he got. The miserable instrument, the acoustics of the rude mess hall and the jangling piano accompaniment could not detract from the real music he gave us, and the crowd, recognizing it to be real, whistled and clapped and demanded more. Two nights after, we repeated our show, and this time the Major honored us with his presence and said many nice things to us afterward.

Since this show, the battalion orchestra has become an institution. I have made several trips to Sémur in search of instruments. The last time I came back in the Major's side-car in the pouring rain with two cornets, a saxophone and a flute packed in around me under the blankets. These were given me by the Entertainment Department at General Headquarters, after nearly an hour's arguing to convince them that they were needed. It is a great addition. Now the orchestra plays always at the movies when they come to town, about twice a week, and last Friday they played at our dance. I will tell you about that.

I thought it was about time to do something for the officers, as they need fun just as much as the enlisted men, so I proposed a dance. "Where will you get the girls?" they said. "The Red Cross nurses in Sémur," said I. "There is no hall here large enough for a dance," said they. "Yes there is!" said I. Mme. Gloriod had told me of a wooden floor made to fit over the tank in the village "lavoir," which the mayor of Pouillenay had had made in the happy days before the war. The lavoir is a good-sized stone structure with a large tank of soapy water in the middle, round which the women scrub and pound their clothes, gossiping, laughing and scolding all the day long in their raucous French. It is not easy to imagine an up-to-date American dance in this mediaeval, sloppy spot. The Major and a few other optimists backed me up and told me to go ahead. After more or less trouble I got the Red Cross nurses and four or five "Y" girls from various towns committed to last Thursday evening. One lieutenant engaged the Sémur orchestra, which is several months older and more professional than ours. Then I made a memorable call on the Mayor of Pouillenay, M. Champenois, a delightful, impressive old Frenchman. I found him in the parlor of his little stone house seated at a huge desk; his sweet little wife, with black lace in her hair, tending the fire. They made me come in and sit down, and an hour went by in the discussion of art, literature, and the affairs of the world, before they would let me approach the business of the day. When finally I did make my errand known, he granted me the lavoir free of charge, undertaking to have the floor put down himself. We parted the best of friends.

Then followed two days of real work; scrubbing, heating, and decorating and lighting the lavoir. To make a long story short, it was charming when we got through. Evergreens, flags, candles and four electric lights softened and illuminated the dank old place, while two stoves made it reasonably dry and warm. The floor was sprinkled with cornmeal. And the dance was a real success; lots of fun, and also with something distinguished and graceful about it. It was what you might call "a real lace party," though the only lace on the scene were the festoons of ancient cobwebs that swayed from the big oaken rafters high above the reach of the longest broom. As the atmosphere of a battalion radiates from its commanding officer, I give Major S. the credit for that unmistakable "touch" that marked our dance.

No sooner off with one dance than I began plotting another. It seemed too bad that the enlisted men shouldn't have a chance, and the lavoir all decorated and ready. Major S. gave me permission, and M. Champenois generously allowed me to keep the lavoir another evening. Where to get the girls? The Red Cross nurses are allowed to dance only with officers. I went to Mme. Gloriod, who helps me out on every proposition. She made me a list of the names of about thirty French girls, the "four hundred" of Pouillenay, so to speak, and in the afternoon, with two dear little girls to guide me, I interviewed the stern mammas of the said damsels, assuring them it was "comme il faut," urging them to come. About ten accepted, many of the others being in mourning or else sick. Orders were sent to three companies of the battalion, inviting them, making it clear that each was to have one hour of dancing, then was to leave, giving the next a chance. That was the only way we could manage. Whew! didn't they come! At seven the hall was packed with Supply Co. men, and a good many others that had no business there, despite the vigilant guard at the door. The French girls came. Our valiant orchestra struck up. We whirled; we bumped into each other; we Virginia-reeled; we circled; and—the hour was up. All too quick! The men, intoxicated by this taste of fun, refused to leave. The guards could not clear the room. Low, discontented mutterings were heard. "The officers danced all night, why can't we?" "We'll break your whole show up if you make us go." "We'll take all the girls off with us." "We'll stay as long as we like." I was angry. It was a moment that required all my tact. I didn't want the evening to break up in a riot. I didn't want to call an officer if I could help it. But they would not go. All the French girls got scared and began coming up to me to say they must go home. I induced them to stay, somehow. I was on the point of calling off the whole dance there and then, when the thought of my dear F Company waiting quietly outside to get in, made me suddenly resolve to put the thing through. I talked to the boys, putting it up to their sense of fair play, and thank goodness, most of them filed out. F Company came in and the dance went on with increased gusto. The hour was up—I called it out;—quietly, like one man F Co. marched out on the minute and E Co. came in. I can tell you my heart warmed toward F Co. that stood by me from the beginning! E. Co. was fine too, and when the dance was over they escorted me home and gave me a cheer of thanks.

And the next morning, by eleven o'clock, the French women in their sabots and dirty petticoats were kneeling round the soapy water in the lavoir, doubtless chattering about the last two nights' events.

March 18th.

Innumerable interruptions! It doesn't seem possible that ten days have slipped by since this letter was begun, and I apologize for letting them. Meanwhile I have been doing everything under the sun. One of my latest jobs is that of bandmaster. I am coaching and coaxing and imploring three coronets, two clarinets, one saxaphone and a trombone, not to mention the old piano, to become friends instead of deadliest enemies. Nothing but implicit faith in the ultimate triumph of harmony over discord has enabled me to survive the shrieks and grunts and clashings of our rehearsals. I have had to orchestrate and write out all the music myself, and incidentally I am acquiring some interesting and practical knowledge of "the brasses." It is great fun. As soon as they are good enough I will annex them to our string orchestra. Indeed I have already promoted one clarinet player, a cunning little Italian, who now ripples away among the violins.

Our Sunday afternoon chocolate parties are very gay now. We bring over the rattle-top piano from the mess hall to the tent and the orchestra plays all afternoon. The tent is packed with soldiers, most of whom I know pretty well by this time. Near the entrance am I in my blue Y. M. C. A. apron, and my assistants, making kettleful after kettleful of *delicious* chocolate. I am very careful to have it delicious. The boys line up and we hand them out cupfuls, and cakes, which they take back to the tables and drink at their leisure while listening to the music or playing checkers. All the little French boys in town congregate round the chocolate caldron and all are eager to help in any way, well knowing what their reward will be. I keep them busy too, and before the afternoon is over each one has a "chocolatey" little mouth and a broad smile and nothing but "kind feelings" for the Americans. I am good friends with these little fellows in their pinafores and wooden shoes. Yesterday I played tag with them, and what a clatter they made in their ungainly sabots, which nevertheless did not prevent their running outrageously fast when I was "it."

Spring is coming. Every morning I listen to the unfamiliar songs of strange birds. Yet they speak the sweet message that needs no interpreting. Occasionally we have a fair day between the rainy ones, and how fair it is! On one of these days I went for a wonderful horseback ride with a fine young artillery lieutenant about Hy's age. We cantered gloriously over open fields. We climbed up a high hill. There we were among rocks and ferns and pines, birds warbling about us, skylarks singing out of sight, the warm sun on us, and behind and beyond the graceful, harmonious view of the long valley with the canal, fringed with poplars, glinting through it, and the cultivated, nicely outlined fields, each a different shade of green, stretching far up the opposite hillside.

Well, I mustn't spend any more time on the scenery, for I will either bore you or make Mamma envious. Here comes another interruption! I am really feeling very well. I am very happy. Every one is more than kind to me. I am convinced I did the right thing to come.

Pouillenay, April 1st.

It is a beautiful bright morning. All is serene in the Y. M. C. A. tent, a few boys writing home and a little group huddled round the stove waiting to go through the "Delouser," a monstrous machine which steamed into town this morning. This is in preparation for GOING HOME, for the 78th has received its orders and will probably leave Pouillenay about April 16th. There is an atmosphere of excitement throughout the town. The longed-for news has come and nothing can surpass the supreme happiness of these homesick boys, who have endured so much heroically, and yet who are so like children. Orders have come that the Y. M. C. A. workers are to move with the Division, so I am to have my first experience of army travel. I am certainly glad that I am to be allowed to go along. I would be broken-hearted if I had to leave my battalion while they were still in France.

Many, many things have been happening since I last wrote. Last week the Lightning Division underwent inspection by General Pershing. The review was held in Les Laumes, and I went over to see it. I had not realized before what an immense body of men an Army Division is. On the vast muddy field stood, motionless, ranks and ranks of khaki-clad soldiers, their protective coloring blending with the green-brown of the field. Here and there the Stars and Stripes and the vivid blue and red of the Infantry and Artillery flags made bright spots on the monotonous brown scene.

General Pershing arrived an hour late, an impressive military figure on his beautiful horse. The inspection lasted almost two hours. Then he presented the D. S. M. to about fifty men, pinning the medal on each, and shaking each by the hand. The band played the Star Spangled Banner, and the whole vast body stood rigidly at Attention. The sun came out, making the scene brilliant and lighting up a lovely white village on the top of the hill in the background. It was very beautiful.

The General next went up into the grand stand and the review began, which means that the whole Division marched past. The Infantry came first in their orderly files, dipping their colors as they went by. Then came the Artillery in its seeming magnificent disorder. The great horses plunging, caissons rattling, drivers holding the reins taut, scarlet flags fluttering, it galloped over the muddy, bumpy field with a wonderful rush. This was followed by the Motorized Artillery which came out of the woods like a swarm of huge creeping beetles. Weird monsters they were, and their deafening rattle reached us at a distance like some great magnified buzz. General Pershing gave a speech next, but I couldn't stand up a minute longer so I left, one of the officers who had also had enough taking me back in his car. So when our boys came marching back at 8.30 that evening, after eleven and a half hours on their feet, I was able to greet them with hot chocolate and cakes in the tent, to their great satisfaction.

Let's see; what else have I been doing? I have been cooking simple meals regularly for the sick boys in the infirmary, and feeding one of them who is too weak to sit up. Then my knowledge of dressmaking has been taxed to the limit, for I was called upon to make a stylish gown for the lady in the battalion show; the lady being a tall and extremely lanky man. We have had lots of fun out of it. We are told that our show is the best in the Division, and it is now touring the whole area, playing every evening. Often I go with them, just for fun, and to dress the lady. We have good times, singing as we tour the country in the two big ambulances that the army provides for our transportation. The boys treat me like their sister.

Of course I am most needed in Pouillenay in the evenings, and that is where I usually am, doing my utmost to bring amusement and gaiety into the tent. I fly from one thing to another. I get the chocolate made, forty gallons or so, (that's the easiest thing I do, Mamma!) then I give two men the job of serving it while I fly for my guitar, tune it up, spend a lot of energy coaxing some bashful soul to play, perhaps getting some one to play the mandolin too, then organizing a Virginia reel or a square dance. It invariably takes coaxing, cajoling, insisting, to get them started, and then they get going, and we dance and swing our partners and grand right and left on the dirt floor, a helpful crowd of bystanders clapping their hands, whistling and singing in syncopated rhythm. Then usually the music gives out, and I take the guitar and play anything and everything I know. Jigs, reels, Italian and Russian tunes, all call forth some response from this cosmopolitan army of ours, and we have songs and dances of all nationalities. What scenes that guitar of mine has taken part in since you gave it to me fourteen years ago! Needless to say, I am glad I brought it with me, though it will always be the worse for wear as a result.

Last night the Supply Co. gave a party in honor of its commander, formerly Captain W. who has just been made a major. He is a great old character, much beloved by his men. The banquet was a surprise to him. The mess hall was crowded with men, while on the stage the officers' table was set. They had invited me and I went in dancing costume prepared to perform after dinner. The regimental band was there and played continuously. I wish you could have seen the bass drum! It had the kaiser's portrait painted on it, so that every time the drummer beat it he hit the kaiser on the head. No wonder he played with spirit! It is a first-class brass band and I found it rather thrilling to dance to it.

I can tell you the main events that happen, but the real things, the chance meetings in sympathy, the gripping handclasp, the halting story of disappointment, the seeking for a little mothering, and yes, for love too—these things I cannot write. I can only give and withhold sympathy as it seems right, and pray and strive to be very true and very clear and very strong.

Oh, but it's easy to make chocolate!

Pouillenay, France,
Monday, April 14th, 1919.

Just a line this morning before I get up, that being the only way I can get a word in edgewise. Once up and dressed, my time is no longer my own; but safe in bed, I am mistress of myself, and though I may be interrupted every ten minutes, the unarguable helplessness of my position is my great protection, and nothing but my conscience can move me. The first hour or so of day is the only time I reserve for myself. It is only thus that I ever see a newspaper, that my hair gets shampooed, clothes mended, or that you occasionally get a letter. This is the time when the men are out drilling or working on the roads, and the tent is empty, so I take advantage of it.

Interruption. By conscience! There is nothing to do about it. I must get up.

April 17th.

You have asked about the Americans' attitude toward the French. In general it is not flattering. Though I don't sympathize at all with the boys in this feeling toward the French, whom I love, yet I see perfectly how it has come about. It springs from the limitations of both nations. Our boys are terribly homesick and restless. Separated by time and distance from their country, they have come to glorify it even more than it deserves. Coming for the most part from thriving towns and farms, accustomed to work, but with the most modern appliances, they are disgusted by the lack of sanitation and the primitive methods of the peasants in these tiny old villages. It is the contempt of young, pressing, large-scale methods of getting results, for ancient, tranquil ways. It is our fierce elimination of waste versus their huge quantity of tiny savings. Nor is our efficiency more materialistic than this French thrift, though each appears sordid to the other. We are different, that is all. We are both greedy.

And then our soldiers meet mostly the worst sort of French girl, which gives them a bad impression of the country. Also, the French are making money off of us for all they are worth. Not the authorities, perhaps, but the people, in all their transactions. It is, in truth, rather disgusting and ungrateful of them, but perfectly inevitable after the glowing descriptions of the wealth of America which they continually hear, and since our boys *will* pay almost anything for what they want, and since they are foolish enough to buy tawdry and worthless souvenirs by the thousands at ridiculously high prices.

And then again, we *never* see an example of fine, strong, and young French manhood. We see the poor old tottering men and the degenerate. Once in a while a French soldier comes through town, and he is usually a poor specimen. We forget that our towns would be equally desolate if we had been at war four years.

It is difficult for this army of simple, honest, normal boys to imagine what they have not seen. Also the weather gets on everybody's nerves. You are inclined to despise anybody so poor-spirited as to settle down and live in such a climate. This continuous, everlasting, never-ending cold rain taxes your temper to the limit. And yet, many very sweet friendships have sprung up between our soldiers and the old women in whose houses they are billeted, their "French mothers" as they call them. And I feel perfectly sure that when they all get home and the dream of America has come true—or perhaps hasn't come true—they will look back on France with real affection and with a little sense of ownership; and they will think of even their discomforts with pleasure. This has been their big adventure; but since they are not bent just now upon reading the book of their own lives, they don't know it.

Paris, May 11th, 1919.

Another shift of scene. Oh, what a change it is! Back to Paris! back to the world, some might say, but—deserted by my family who are now joyously on the water going home. Gone are those happy, remarkable days in darling Pouillenay, gone my beloved Battalion of khaki-clad boys, and left behind is the peaceful, beautiful countryside of the Côte d'Or with its white cattle on the green hills, its ducks and its chickens, its skylarks, and its dear population in sabots.

It has been impossible to send you anything but postal cards the last few weeks because I have been so busy. Also the 78th's post office was disorganized owing to preparations for moving, so I must go back a long way if I am to give you any idea of what has been happening. Let's see.

The day before Easter the sun came out. Sergeant R. and I went out to gather flowers for Easter decorations for the tent. The fields were covered, fairly sparkling, with little yellow primroses too pretty for words. And in the wet places were masses of delicate lavender flowers. Brooks gurgling, sprays of wild fruit blossoms in the hedges, everything juicy and green and radiant. After weeks of rain the sun had actually broken forth to glorify it all. We filled baskets with a feathery mixture of gold and lavender, this sweet-natured, devoted boy and myself, and we had a good time.

The next morning, Easter Day, I was up very early, and by breakfast time the tent was a perfect bower of flowers. It was really lovely. And the surprise and pleasure of the boys! "Seems as though we was back home!" "I forgot all about its being Easter!" "Say, I never thought we could *have* Easter in France!" And one boy who kept hanging round all day taking it all in, said, "What'd you go to all that trouble for? It's no use doing that over here." Yet he was back every morning to watch me arrange the flowers, for I kept them always in the tent after that, and the little French children would bring me fresh ones.

On Easter morning an open air memorial service had been planned in honor of those in the Battalion who had been killed. The day was beautiful. The Battalion assembled in a beautiful little field on the outskirts of the town, the four companies drawn up facing each other. The choir, which I had drilled, composed of about twenty men, stood together. A platform had been built in the centre, from which Major S., always fine, gave a splendid short address. The chaplain then delivered a sermon, less impressive. The choir sang "Rock of Ages," which was quite solemnly beautiful. Next the roll was called, which was astonishingly long. It was a strain on those standing ranks of boys to hear the names of their dead comrades, and the tears were coursing down many cheeks. The choir sang "My Faith Looks Up To Thee." Taps were sounded, followed by a roll of drums. There was a moment of tense silence. Then to the relief of all, the little Battalion Band struck up a quickstep and the Companies marched off cheerily. It was truly a beautiful service, and the warm sun and birds warbling in the trees gave it an added sweetness. It meant a great deal to the men.

After the service I walked back to the tent with the Colonel and the Major, who came in and admired my decorations as much as I could wish. In the afternoon was a thrilling baseball game between our Battalion and the 1st Battalion of the 312th Infantry. (Baseball has been our great amusement of late.) I slipped away before it was over to get my kettle boiling, so that afterward I had hot chocolate and cakes for all the boys that wanted it; it never has to go begging. In the evening we gathered round the poor rheumatic piano and sang and sang till old Mathieu, the electrician, turned the lights off. Now doesn't that sound like a happy Easter?

Meanwhile preparations for moving were going on. All the stoves were taken from the billets and of course the weather turned cold and rainy again. We froze, and we waded in mud, but we didn't care; we were "going home."

The next big stunt I pulled off was a candy pull. It took me a day's journey in the side-car to get the ingredients, two whole crates of Karo corn syrup and ten pounds of margarine. Company F allowed me to use their kitchen which was next to the tent, and I found a professional candy-maker who superintended the cooking. What a time we had! Rain pouring outside, our merry little orchestra playing for all it was worth in the tent, tent packed with soldiers, I in my blue apron dashing back and forth from mess hall to tent with fresh batches of candy ready to be pulled, which was seized by eager and *clean* hands, pulled and twisted until it was white, and consumed in no time. I had had plenty of water heated and there was a tremendous scrubbing of big calloused hands when some fellow "guessed he'd have a try at it." We made more delicious candy than the battalion could eat, and sent it round to the officers. Altogether the evening was voted a hilarious success.

And the next day the Division began to entrain for Bordeaux. Not my Battalion, but other Infantry Regiments, the Machine Gunners and the Artillery. I left Pouillenay for three days and went to Epoisse, the entraining point, to help serve cocoa and cakes to the departing soldiers. The weather was abominable, a driving wet snow all the time and we had to stand in it for hours. "We" were four girls. It was a most exhausting business. I got back to Pouilienay rather the worse for wear, but I couldn't stop on my last day with my boys, and I was busy with a thousand things I made fudge for my platoon and took it to their billet in the evening. The good old tent had been taken down in my absence and there was nothing left of the "Y". There in the dark billet of the 1st Platoon of F Co. I had my last good time with my boys. It was raining as usual. They received me with a cheer, and when they saw the fudge, the cheer grew louder. We got up a Virginia reel and how those boys swung me round! And when we were too hot to dance more, we sang, until we were hoarse. And then I had to go, for Lieut. J. of F Co. was giving a little party for the Major and I had promised to be there with my guitar.

That last night was an uproarious one in Pouillenay. The estaminets did their worst—it was their last chance at American francs—and way into the morning the streets resounded with drunken yells. I fear the majority were celebrating. I don't blame them. If the Y. M. C. A. had let us keep our tent we might have planned a counter-drive, but as it was, we could do nothing. That night, as I lay listening to the noise, I became aware of a new sound. I couldn't believe my ears—but yes, I had heard it once before in England—a nightingale! That piercing, passionate, ecstatic song! It rang out between the shouts of the revelers in the street below. How much more it seemed to say than those drunken voices of men! and yet all that it says is through the soul of man.

The day of departure dawned, warm and cloudy. I was to "hike" with my platoon over to Les Laumes, the entraining point, a distance of five kilometres. In my heart I knew that this was my last day with the battalion, though most of the boys expected me to go down to Bordeaux after them. But Y. M. C. A. headquarters had ordered me to stay three days at Les Laumes, serving cocoa. So we marched over. In an hour we were at the ugly little railroad town where the Engineers have been quartered all winter. I left the battalion to march off to their lunch, while I went down to the Y. M. C. A. to help the cocoa contingent. There I found the other girls working. Pretty soon the boys came in to get their last sweet, hot, "hand out" from the "Y," then I went with them to the station. There at the railroad gate I said goodbye. How I shook hands! Sometimes my voice would break as I talked, which made me furious with myself. They had all gone through the gate and a group of officers stood around me to say goodbye. "Well, Sis, how are you standing it?" said one. "She hasn't cried yet," said another. "Don't set me off," I begged. So Lieut. M. mercifully stuffed a cake into my mouth, which made us all laugh. These kind boys! Well, they had all passed through the train gate. I didn't follow them because I couldn't seem to get command of myself and I *wouldn't* send them off with anything but a smile. I went back to the "Y" hut. There I worked like fury, and talked and laughed with the men, and in half an hour I was all right again. The long train of freight cars loaded with my family was still standing at the station. I went out on the platform. A cheer came from every carful. I started at the engine and went down the line, stopping at every car. I threw myself into a rollicking mood and got them all to laughing. "But we'll see you in Bordeaux won't we, Miss Shortall?" came from all sides, and I would have to explain. When I got to the first platoon of F Co. Sergeant R. picked me up and put me in the car, and many were the half humorous, half serious threats of keeping me, and making me go with them. I certainly was tempted to do it. Major S. came along and found me there. How I hated to say goodbye to him, this kind friend whose attitude of respect, of comradeship, has typified that of the whole battalion toward me! He has been my great encourager through it all. The splendid morale of his men, as you must realize, has been largely due to his fine spirit which permeated the battalion.

And so—they were gone. Some strange officer in a car kindly took me back to Pouillenay. That deserted town! For me, its soul had departed. There was the familiar scene, inanimate. No figures in khaki anywhere, no one whistling to me or waving, nothing left of them but their fresh tracks in the mud everywhere, and wave on wave of loneliness surged through me, that was almost terrifying in its intensity. Thank heaven the sun had come out! I walked up my street, talking to the disconsolate French women who stood in the doorways looking out as though all the joy in life had departed. Truly, the best comment on the behaviour of our boys is the genuine sorrow of the French at seeing them go. I got up to my billet where dear M. and Mme. Gloriod met me, their faces covered with tears. It was good to see them again, and they were overjoyed at seeing me. Mme. Gloriod began getting me something to eat, while I, too exhausted to think or feel, went to bed.

And now, to pass briefly over the next four days in Pouillenay, I am back in Paris. Where they will send me I haven't the least idea. I volunteered to go home, because the "Y" is swamped with workers now, and had the satisfaction of being told that I was not the kind they wanted to send home. This means a good deal to me because I am quite aware that, not being as strong as the majority, I have given fewer hours of service than most of them, and now to have from all sides tokens of appreciation is overwhelmingly gratifying.

I have a "Memory Book" of the 2nd Bn., 311th Inf. which you will be interested in seeing when I get home. The Major wrote a little verse on the first page, stamping it with the official seal. It goes:

She put the "Pull" in Pouillenay,
Likewise the push there, too.
Her middle name's Efficiency,
And lassie—here's to you!

By the way, if any members of the Battalion come to see you, I know you will give them a real welcome. Also, if by chance the 78th Divisional Show should play in Chicago, it really would be jolly to do something for the Cast and Management. It is to be composed largely of boys from our Battalion.

Goodbye. There is lots more to say, but I really can't.

American Y. W. C. A. Hostess House,
Chateau "La Gloriette,"
Chaumont, May 24th.

Paris is over with. There was much waiting and rushing and guessing and meeting of friends. I have seen so many, old and new-made, ladies and gentlemen. I have run around in civilian clothes —my uniform went to the cleaner's—and have gone to the theatre and dined in restaurants and listened to orchestras, dodged taxis and ridden in them, gone to bed late, spent some money,—in short, have done all the things I ordinarily avoid doing.

In Paris you see more Americans then French, and more American women than men, all in assorted uniforms. They certainly have brought a mob of women over here! and now they are trying to ship them home as fast as possible. The Y. M. C. A. is sending workers, men and women, home at the rate of several hundred a week.

They have given me a reassignment. Yesterday I came to Chaumont where G. H. Q. is stationed, and I shall be sent out from here—somewhere, to do—something. At present I don't know anything about it. Meanwhile I am most comfortably lodged in the Y. W. C. A. Hostess House, a large and beautiful château with lovely grounds. I am now sitting on an old stone wall on the hillside which I came upon after following a shady path. Beside me are bushes drooping with white and purple lilacs, all about me birds are warbling, and beyond and below is a panorama of sunny France through which runs a white road where American trucks go thundering by in clouds of dust. And it is all very lazy and hazy and—satisfactory. For I don't seem to be thinking beyond. One doesn't when one is "militaire." One gives oneself up to the powers above. No one doesn't, either! Not at critical moments. One can steer and veer—gently.

Now it begins to look as though the work of the Y. M. C. A. were nearly over. No more personnel is allowed in Germany, the army of occupation being fully equipped, and if there is nothing to do, one ought to go home. If, after the signing of the Peace, it seems necessary to keep our army over here some time, I shall make an effort to be sent to the Rhine. Wherever our boys are waiting, and getting disgusted, I want to be.

It is likely that a good friend of mine, a Lieutenant of Co. F may come to see you. I asked him to, as he lives near Chicago. He is a fine fellow and has been so kind to me. I think he would enjoy our home. I can see the garden and everything, and sometimes—I wish I were there.

Chaumont, June 11th, 1919.

Again I sit in the garden of the château, but what a world of things I have seen and done since I last wrote you from this spot! I have a sinking feeling, that this is going to be a long letter, and I wonder how I will ever find time to finish it.

The day after my last long letter I left Chaumont with another girl to go to an entraining point just out of Gondrecourt, where we were to serve chocolate to the departing troops. We started in an automobile with all our baggage, a "Y" man being our chauffeur. As usual, orders were vague and mixed, and we landed in several wrong towns, before we found out where we were wanted. This however entailed so much driving over exceptionally lovely country, that we really didn't mind. At length, in the late afternoon we reached our destination, Barisey la Côte, a railhead, and I believe the most desolate spot in France. Picture a freight yard in all its heat and hideousness, and a collection of wooden barracks, no trees, and you will see the place. Big Bay is pretty in comparison. The water was bad, and had to be chlorinated and hauled from afar, the weather was blazing hot, the dust lay inches deep on the roads, ready to rise in a stifling cloud at the passage of any vehicle. Here we found some five hundred men (about a hundred colored), and many hundreds of mules and horses. Part of the 7th Division was there temporarily on its way home. The rest were the railhead force.

The first thing for us to do was to search for a billet. As always, the officers could not be outdone in their courtesy to us women in the A. E. F. and every effort was made to make us comfortable. A little asbestos shack of two rooms was turned over to us, and an orderly assigned to us. I wish you could have seen "Mac, the housekeeper" as we came to call him, the most lovable little Irishman who took the best of care of us. For beds we had two wooden frames with chicken wire stretched over them, and plenty of blankets. As we expected to stay ten days it was worth while making our little home attractive, so with a few scarfs that I had, and flowers, photographs and books, we made a charming living-room which men and officers appreciated to the full. My companion, Miss B., is a jolly girl and we have become great pals. She plays ragtime "to beat the band," which is a good accomplishment over here. Both of us being short and dark, we have been taken for sisters everywhere.

The entraining work at the railhead left us a great deal of spare time, and we decided to open a little "Y". An open shed with a roof was procured and we started in to arrange it. The boys entered into the idea with enthusiasm. One volunteered to wire it for electric lights, others put down a floor, and everybody helped decorate it with flags, and bright chintz which the Y. M. C. A. gave us. A lieutenant lent me a truck, and through a stroke of luck I obtained a piano which was the finishing touch. We soon had a gay, festive pavilion, and how those boys, who were just sick with boredom, flocked there! Again I felt that this work was immeasurably worth while. Miss B. and I worked together pretty well, luckily. We had dances and stunt shows, and singing all the time, and lemonade always on tap, both at the railway station and at our "Y," so you see our hands were full. Most of the men were westerners, and enlisted, not drafted, and I couldn't help compare them with my boys of the 78th. As a class, I believe they are more forceful and more responsive. It is the independent, tall ranch owner or cow puncher, in comparison with the small storekeeper or factory hand. Don't think I am forgetting for a moment my friends in my dear battalion who stood above the average, but they *did* stand above the average. As a crowd, the western boys sing better, dance better, talk better, and swear louder! But everywhere in the United States is the respect for the American woman the same, and everywhere our soldiers are our devoted, helpful brothers.

Well—to cut this short—I forgot to tell you about the darkies! It was my first experience with them over here. Against the advice of a southern lieutenant, I went into their barracks one day and got to talking with them. "Don't any of you boys play or sing?" I asked. "Yes'm. Ah'm a musician mahself," modestly replied a coal black boy. "Are you? well what do you play?" "Oh, mos' anything, ma'am." "Do you play the guitar?" "Yes'm, we've got a guitar but the *strangs* is broke." Of course I was able to remedy that, and gave them all the "strangs" they needed, in addition lending them my guitar, which they never failed to return to me in good condition at the specified time. They had a great time, sitting out on piles of lumber, twanging the guitars and singing. You could almost imagine you were down on the old Mississippi. Whenever I passed, some one would call out, "Miss, ain't you gwine to play for us?" And I would take the guitar and sing, while black, attentive faces packed close all around me. "Give us jes one mo', Miss," they would plead when I started to go. My greatest hit was "When Yankee Doodle learns to parley-vous français," and when I would come to "Ulala! Sweet Papa!" they would smack their knees, and giggle with delight. One evening they came down to our "Y" and one clogged, while another played the piano, and another evening they came and sang to us. On the whole the white boys were on good terms with the blacks, though they had one little row while we were there. The whites were playing the blacks at baseball. The game was a comic affair, and was proceeding with the utmost good nature, when one boy thoughtlessly called a darky a "nigger." Great outrage! The colored boys refused to play, the game was called off, and the black team retreated in sulky silence. However, they all made up the next day, and the game was resumed.

Now I must skip over all the little human events that go to make our days, and tell you about our trip to the front. I have seen it, the strip of land on which the world's attention has been focused for so long. I have been to No Man's Land, and the Argonne, and Verdun. For a long time I had no desire to go. Something in me shrank from the thought of hundreds of unimaginative tourists speeding over the ground where men have so recently died by the thousands. It seemed like flaunting our lives in the very faces of those who had laid down theirs that we might live more happily. Also, from all we have heard, and read, and felt, I thought I could picture the war and the front as vividly as if I had been there. And so I could. Strange as it may sound, nothing surprised me up there. I am not filled with any more hatred or horror after seeing it than I was before. It is now a vast desolation. I hope the world is going to be better for it. Perhaps the flowers that are even now covering the raw wounds in the earth are the flowers of hope, ready to sow the seeds of promise. I don't know whether to describe to you just what I have seen or not. I'll try.

We were a party of eight Y. M. C. A. workers, four men and four girls. We travelled in two ramshackle old Fords. Ours had come from a salvage pile, but it still had plenty of life in it, and got over the ground with a terrific amount of noise and jarring. The noise was indeed a Godsend, for it made conversation impossible, and mercifully obliterated even our most brilliant sallies of wit. I was able to retreat behind the motor's unmuffled roaring far into the landscape and into my own thoughts, and there I stayed most of the time.

We left Gondrecourt on Thursday afternoon, June 5th. It was one of those soft days, delicious humid air, that brought out all the fragrance of the country, a gray sky and a soft light that gave us the true essence of the colors in the fields because there were no shadows. A tapestry day, when all shades were subdued, woven through a warp of mist.

This part of France, gently undulating, with fields of grain and carefully tended wood, is very lovely. There is a luxuriant grace about it. It is a land of carved stone crosses. We kept passing them by the roadside, beautiful in form and varied in design. It is the land of Jeanne d'Arc, and often we passed her image with a vase of fresh flowers beneath it.

In the early evening we arrived at Bar-le-Duc, a sweet little city built round the famous old château on the hill. As we drove through the streets I was struck by the sign "Câve," "Câve Voutée," or "Câve, 12 hommes," printed on the fronts of the houses. All places of shelter from bombs were clearly marked. Turning a corner we came upon a building in ruins. Then upon one with a hole in the roof. Bar-le-Duc had not escaped the enemies' ravages. There we spent the night. The next day we lunched at St. Menehould, then went out into the Argonne itself. Oh, I can't describe it! Think of cultivated fields giving way to vast rank stretches; ditches and shell holes everywhere; rusty, tangled barbed wire on all sides; miles and miles of broken, sagging telephone wires; pathetic pulverized villages, scarcely discernible on the plain; tops of hills sawed off and furrowed by shell fire; lonely wooden crosses dotting the fields everywhere; refuse of all kinds along the roadside—a man's puttee, a wrecked automobile, rusty iron, a rifle belt, piles of unexploded shells; and signs in French and English bearing severe traffic orders spoke eloquently of the mad congestion on the roads, now so lonely. This whole immense silence and desertion told of pressing crowds, of fierce exertion, of wild excitement, of cursing and of praying, of roaring and blazing and dying. Eight months ago it was hell on fire. And now there was not a soul in sight, nor a sound. The hot sun beat on it all. Now and then came a fetid odor that turned you sick. The war is over.

Stopping at a prison camp for gasoline, a lieutenant came up to me, and seeing the lightning streak on my shoulder he told me that he too belonged to the 78th and remembered meeting me last winter. He offered to take me and whoever else was interested through the wood of Ardennes where the 78th had fought in October. You can imagine I was glad to go. So I have seen the scarred and blasted woods and ravines through which my boys panted and bled and kept on. I seemed to almost live through it with them, and I felt the exhilaration of battle more than the horror, and wished fervently that I could have been a man fighting with them. We came to a place where the Germans had blown up two engines. Right there Lieut. S. said the 311th had its supply dump. And sure enough, on a tree I saw the good old Lightning Sign! I took it down, for I know the boy who made all the signs, and intend to give it to some one for a souvenir.

But to skip over more quickly, we spent that night at Romagne, where the great American-Argonne cemetery is being made. The next day we visited Grand Pré, the town which the 78th took; a terrible wreck, bearing the signs of hot street fighting, the standing walls being nicked and riddled with machine gun fire. Here again my spirit was back with my fighting boys reliving it all with them.

And then, following the long desolate front, we went to Verdun. But I can't give you any more descriptions. That Verdun battle field! That stronghold, which the Germans did not pass! I will never forget it. Even the Argonne is a green, fertile place in comparison. Blasted skeleton forests, dead fields, plowed and plowed again with shells. Death, and the silence of death.

I found myself repeating under my breath some verses of poetry that had caught my eye last winter, written by an officer.

"Nous avons cherché la Victoire.
Ou se cache-t-elle, dis-moi?
Et, repassant la Meuse noire,
Elle me crie, 'Au fond de toi.' "

and

"Est-ce vrai que la mort est une vie immense?
Est-ce vrai que la vie est l'amour de mourir?"

Lieut. Joachim Gasquet, auteur des
"Hymnes de la Grande Guerre."

In such ways I tried to understand and to visualize all that had taken place there.

We returned to Gondrecourt Sunday evening. On Monday I had a new and comic experience. The Y. M. C. A. announced an auction of all its supplies and I was asked to conduct it, being the only American who spoke French. They tell me that I have missed my vocation, that I ought to have been a saleslady. Any way I made a lark out of it, and gave the shrewd old French ladies tit for tat, which delighted them.

Now I am back in Chaumont working in the library of the "Y." It is a temporary job. I have half an idea I shall be homeward bound soon.

Goodbye dear family. This pen will drive me distracted, and they cost ten dollars over here!

June 25th.
Officers' Hut, Chaumont.

Another change of job. From buck privates to elderly majors and lieutenant colonels! About a week ago I was assigned to the Officers' Hut at Chaumont. This has been, naturally, the largest and pleasantest officers' "Y" in France, but owing to the daily diminishing of the personnel at G. H. Q. the business of the "Y" is rapidly falling off. I was sent here principally on account of my knowledge of French. Ahem! There is a large restaurant and a French force employed, and I am the medium of communication with them. I manage to keep the peace by translating the orders diplomatically, softening them and *politening* them.

There are many pleasant aspects to this work. I enjoy very much being with cultivated people again, though my fondness for the expressive doughboy is as great as ever. After all, there is something comfortable about good grammar, and I confess that a conversation with a dash of highbrowism contains a pleasure all its own.

The first day I was here I met Colonel MacC. of Chicago. He has been very kind to me. Sunday evening he took me to call on some French friends of his and we had a very delightful time.

The atmosphere of Chaumont is totally different from that of dear little Pouillenay. There are many American girls, Red Cross, Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A., and giddy telephone girls. Every night there is a party at the château and much gaiety. The boys here certainly have a great deal of entertainment. The social pace is too much for me. I get out of things as much as I can without being too rude. It won't last much more than a week anyway, and then I shall be ready and glad to come home.

Peace has come! "Le jour de gloire est arrivé." Early yesterday morning, I was awakened by the strains of a band approaching nearer and nearer. It didn't sound like an American band, and I jumped out of bed to see what it was. There in the early grayness of morning French soldiers were marching to a band composed of bugles and drums. They marched seriously, with rifles over their shoulders and bayonets fixed. This was their triumphant march, yet there was no triumph in it. As I watched the little blue figures keeping step to their strange yet spirited march, the tears came to my eyes, and I felt the tragedy of France, and I loved her. In Paris they say there were all sorts of gay doings, in which the Americans took part, but I shall always remember this little column of men, marching solemnly through the town of Chaumont.

Paris, July 15.

"Plans have been seething these last ten days since I have been in Paris, but after a great deal of sifting and shifting I have accepted the offer of the French Red Cross. I am discharged from the Y. M. C. A. and am enrolled as a member of the "Union des Femmes de France!" This means that I finish the summer working in the devastated regions of France, and I go next Thursday to Noyon. They permitted me to keep my old uniform and my cape. It seemed so stupid to buy another expensive suit when my present one is practically as good as new. (I do believe these Y. M. C. A. uniforms are imperishable!) So I removed the triangle from my sleeve, and I now form part of an organization totally French, but—they allow me to retain the dear old red patch with its Lightning Streak, which means so much to me, on my left shoulder."

d.
as
he
ed
he
is
in
ys
ng

ys
al
of
he
he
at
e-
to
ni-
n-
c-
M.
ed
rt
ow
nt-
ny